



Challenges and Coping Strategies of Senior High School Working Students in the Implementation of Distance Learning during the COVID 19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

One of the populations affected by the COVID 19 pandemic is the number of senior high school working students. There are some learners who opted to work to augment family income due to financial constraints brought about by the pandemic. This qualitative study sought to find the challenges and coping strategies of senior high school working students in the implementation of distance learning during the COVID 19 pandemic. Results will lead to a theory and the basis of a mixed-method research in identifying the factors experienced by this type of learners in basic education which will later lead to policy recommendations to improve their academic performance. Interviews were conducted to four Senior High School working students from Carrascal National High School who were invited using purposive sampling. The interviews were conducted with prepared questions being recoded through a smart phone and written through notes. Data were transcribed, coded into themes, analyzed and verified. The research findings indicate that the challenges and coping strategies perceived by the participants are: difficulty in time management, low energy level in answering the learning activity sheets, poor comprehension on analytical subjects, financial hardship for gadgets and internet load, poor self-confidence, support from family, help from teachers, encouragement from friends and feeling of self-worth.

Introduction

Since its outbreak in late December 2019, COVID-19 has wreaked havoc across the world and like any critical sector, education has been hardly hit. Students, schools, colleges and universities and other learning institutions have been deeply impacted. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), over 800 million learners from around the world have been affected, 1 in 5 learners cannot attend school, 1 in 4 cannot attend higher education classes, and over 102 countries have ordered nationwide school closures while 11 have implemented localized school closure.

The Philippines is one of the five countries in the world that have not started in-person classes since the pandemic began, affecting the right to learn of more than 27 million Filipino students.

“In 2020, schools globally were fully closed for an average of 79 teaching days, while the Philippines has been closed for more than a year, forcing students to enroll in distance learning modalities. The associated consequences of school closures – learning loss, mental distress, missed vaccinations, and heightened risk of drop out, child labor, and child marriage – will be felt by many children, especially the youngest learners in critical development stages,” UNICEF Philippines Representative OyunsakhanDendevnorov says.

The crisis in the Philippines comes as countries across the world, including the United States, have been grappling with one of the worst disruptions of public schooling in modern history. Governments have struggled to balance the imperative of health and safety with the public duty to educate children. Where schools have been closed for a long time, such as the Philippines, education experts have expressed concerns that the pandemic has created a “lost generation” of students, buffeted by the limits of remote learning and by overstretched parents struggling to serve as surrogate physics and literature teachers.

“As the pandemic wreaks havoc on family incomes, without support, many could resort to child labor,” said ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder. “Social protection is vital in times of crisis, as it provides assistance to those who are most vulnerable. Integrating child labor concerns across broader policies for education, social protection, justice, labor markets, and international human and labor rights makes a critical difference.”

According to the brief, COVID-19 could result in a rise in poverty and therefore to an increase in child labor as households use every available means to survive. Some studies show that a one percentage point rise in poverty leads to at least a 0.7 per cent increase in child labor in certain countries.

“In times of crisis, child labor becomes a coping mechanism for many families,” said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. “As poverty rises, schools close and the availability of social services decreases, more children are pushed into the workforce. As we reimagine the world post-COVID, we need to make sure that children and their families have the tools they need to weather similar storms in the future. Quality education, social protection services and better economic opportunities can be game changers.”

Vulnerable population groups – such as those working in the informal economy and migrant workers – will suffer most from economic downturn, increased informality and unemployment, the general fall in living standards, health shocks and insufficient social protection systems, among other pressures.

Evidence is gradually mounting that child labor is rising as schools close during the pandemic. Temporary school closures are currently affecting more than 1 billion learners in over 130 countries. Even when classes restart, some parents may no longer be able to afford to send their children to school.

In 2011, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported that there were 2.1 million Filipino child workers, nearly all of whom work hazardous jobs, including small-scale mining.

Philippine law prohibits children from engaging in any form of hazardous labor. It allows only two forms of child work: employment in the entertainment industry or in family-run businesses as long as the children are continuously provided with education.

The economic crisis in the Philippines brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic has fueled a rise in child labor, according to a government report.

Children have become “collateral damage from pandemic” as families are forcing them to work under tedious conditions and in dangerous environments, said the report issued by the Department of Labor and Employment.

Meeting the Philippine government’s zero child labor goal next year may be an uphill climb especially with the suspension of the profiling of child laborers due to the pandemic, according to Social Watch Philippines (SWP).

Of the 266,873 profiled child laborers between 2018-2020, only 21 percent or 56,276 of the profiled children have been removed from child labor.

II. Literature Review

In a life time, individuals in different parts of the world have experienced, witnessed and testified on the various natural calamities and disasters which have claimed lives and wrecked properties that occurred at various times of the year, or at different seasons. But this decade, except perhaps in isolated places, peoples of planet earth are witnessing, experiencing and documenting the one and only disaster that is confronting almost every one, everywhere at one time and perhaps, one of the longest durations – the deadly coronavirus disease, now known as COVID-19 (Tedros, 2020). It was estimated that mortality figures globally may be around the 50 million level (British Medical Journal, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020). In the Philippines, people in the different regions continue to be victims of natural calamities, like the destructive typhoons where strong rains, violent winds and drowning floods, and volcanic eruptions, have become part of the Filipino life. However, COVID-19 is a tragic disaster that is not only new but which the people are very much unprepared to confront with.

The World Economic Forum reports that in the Ivory Coast, there has been a 10% decrease in households’ income which led to an increase in child labor of 5%. Children from marginalized minority groups, homeless, migrant refugees, disabled, and those living in war or disaster-prone areas are at particular risk of extreme deprivation or starvation in this unprecedented crisis (Ahad, Parry, Willis, 2020). The ILO and UNICEF estimates that a 1% rise in poverty can result in a 0.7% surge in child labor.

Despite the reported decline in child labor from 1995 to 2000, it remains a major concern. In 2016, it was estimated that ~150 million children under the age of 14 are engaged in labor worldwide, with most of them working under circumstances that denies them a playful childhood and jeopardize their health (UNICEF, 2016).

Most working children are 11–14 years, but around 60 million are 5–11 years old.⁷ There are no exact numbers of the distribution of child labor globally; however, available statistics show that 96% of child workers are in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Parker, 1997).

The deprivations of working students started even before the pandemic and their difficult student life has been noted in recent years. A major cause is the increasing cost of tuition, with the reduction of government subsidies to universities and tuition hikes in both the national and private sectors (https://www.mext.go.jp/content/20191225-mxt_sigakujo-000003337_5.pdf. Accessed Jul 23, 2020).

Previous research on the health of working students has shown that working part-time for long periods of time can lead to mental health problems, and it has often been noted that this can lead to lower academic performance (Rochford C, Michael Connolly M, Jonathan Drennan J, 2009).

Male working students have slightly more stressful time management than female working students, and that organized time management is never declared by any of the male working students, whereas some of their female counterparts have declared that they have organized time management (Antipolo, 2021).

In this Philippine context, remote learning reveals a digital divide among Filipino students (Santos, 2020). This current situation in remote learning may most possibly exacerbate existing inequalities and may translate to barriers in online learning. For example, a cross-sectional study conducted nationwide reported that thirty-two percent (32 %) and twenty-two percent (22%) out of 3, 670 Filipino medical students surveyed have difficulties adjusting to new learning styles and do not have reliable internet access, respectively (Baticulon et al., 2020). For some, it may present difficulty to purchase a facilitative learning device to easily tune in to online classes and immediately turn in assignments in the online system (Santos, 2020). Despite the efforts to make education accessible for all, many difficulties are still confronting Filipino university students in the practice of distance education.

Several studies have been conducted to report the stress (e.g. AlAteeq, Alijhani & AlEesa, 2020; and Baloran, 2020) and challenges encountered by students in virtual learning spaces in their respective countries (e.g. Adnan & Anwar, 2020 in Pakistan; Arinto, 2016 in the Philippines; Henaku, 2020 in Ghana; Matswetu, et al., 2020 in Zimbabwe; Subedi et al., 2020 in Nepal; and Dhawan, 2020 in India). A most recent comprehensive study including 31 countries (Bozkurt et al., 2020) was also conducted to look at how the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the education arena across the globe. This multi-country study significantly reported reflections, lessons learned, and suggestions on how to navigate education in this time of uncertainty. With the goal in mind to help authorities come up with better responses to education, this study endeavors to provide a piece of evidence in the context of a developing country as regards the difficulties experienced by Filipino Senior High School students. If this inquiry will be addressed, lessons can be drawn and may eventually open windows for relevant actions.

Thus, this study aimed to describe the challenges and coping strategies of Senior High School working students in the implementation of distance learning during the COVID 19 Pandemic.

III. METHODOLOGY

a. Research Questions

These are the questions posed for this study:

- What are the perceived challenges and coping strategies of Senior High School working students in the implementation of distance learning during the COVID 19 Pandemic?
- What ways are to be employed after coming up with a theory to enhance the well-being of Senior High School working students in the implementation of distance learning during the COVID 19 Pandemic?

b. Qualitative Approach

A qualitative approach was chosen as the research method for this study. A qualitative “approach” is a general way of thinking about conducting qualitative research. It describes, either explicitly or implicitly, the purpose of the qualitative research, the role of the researcher(s), the stages of research, and the method of data analysis (Trochim, 2018). Qualitative research involves a process known as induction, whereby data is collected relating to a specific area of study and from this data the researcher constructs different concepts and theories. A qualitative approach was considered more relevant to have this research as it allowed greater chance of gaining more depth and meaning based on the participants’ experiences during the initial implementation of the distance learning modality opposed to a quantitative approach which is more structured and numerically-based.

c. Interview

Semi-structured interviews were selected to carry out this research study. They allowed the participants to elaborate and with that provided more flexibility, range and therefore the capacity to elicit more information from the participant. Semi-structured interviews permit scope for individuals to answer questions more on their own terms than the standardized interview permits, yet still provides a good structure

for comparability over that of the focused interview (May, 1997). Kumar (2005) views the interview as the most suitable approach for studying complex and sensitive areas as the interviewer has the opportunity to prepare a participant before asking sensitive questions and to explain complex ones to them in person.

While the interview process is a valuable means of collecting rich and in-depth data, it can prove to be an expensive and time consuming process. Interaction between the interviewer and the participant can differ as each interview is unique and the quality of the responses obtained from different interviews may vary significantly (Kumar, 2005). Furthermore, the quality of the data generated is affected by the experience, skills and commitment of the interviewer (Kumar, 2005). A risk of researcher bias can also exist. In addition, it can prove to be a difficult task to gain reliable data on the research subject if there are a small number of participants involved, unlike the quantitative approach which involves a higher number of participants and hence in certain circumstances can provide more far reaching and reliable data results.

d. Sampling

The ideas behind a sampling approach vary significantly, and reflect the purposes and questions directing the study (Punch, 1998), The researcher used purposive sampling method. This method is essentially strategic and necessitates an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research question and sampling (Bryman, 2004). The inclusion criterion of choosing the participants was based on the students who are working and are enrolled in the Senior High School during the distance learning modality brought about by COVID 19 pandemic. The researcher chose to conduct the research to four senior high school students who are presently employed during the distance learning modality. The choice of having four interviewees aimed to provide a more coherent group which makes the comparison between the subjects more relevant.

. Participants were invited students of Carrascal National High School.

Participant	Sex	Age	Nature of work
A	Male	18	Store keeper
B	Male	18	Rice mill operator
C	Male	19	Mining-related
D	Male	19	Construction Worker

e. Data Collection

The collection of data took place on October 29, 2021. A smart phone was used to record the discussion and notes were written. All discussions were transcribed. The participants were invited through their class adviser and the conduct of interviews happened at Hotel Karajaw,

Cantilan, Surigao del Sur. Due to the health protocols, they practiced wearing of masks and physical distancing was observed during the duration of the discussion. A semi-structured set of questions were thrown to the individuals and they are free to discuss their ideas based on the trigger statements. Each participant was also given ample time to share his/her perceptions on the questions. The questions were mainly open-ended ones with a small number of closed questions relating to perceived challenges and coping strategies of senior high school working students in the implementation of distance learning during the COVID 19 pandemic. Meals and snacks were served and the participants were told to be excused if they want to take health breaks.

The interview was structured into three sections namely:

- Participants' demographics
- Challenges the participants encountered during the implementation of the distance learning modality brought about by the pandemic.
- Coping strategies, they employ during distance learning modality.

f. Data Analysis

Once data was transcribed, it was then coded, analyzed and verified. The process of transcribing the responses can help the researcher to gain more understanding of the subject from repeatedly listening to the recorded discussion and reading the transcribed notes. Coding the data started when all the data were fully transcribed (see Appendix 2). The codes applied are keywords which are used to categorize or organize text and are considered essential part of qualitative research (Serantakos, 1998). The data were then analyzed, categorized into themes and sub-themes which emerged through the coding process. The themes were assigned with codes accordingly. Interpreting the data followed by identifying recurring themes throughout highlighting similarities and differences from the data. Finally, verification was conducted which involved the process of checking the validity of understanding by rechecking the transcripts and codes again, therefore allowing the researcher to verify hypotheses already arrived at previously.

g. Ethical Considerations

The researcher made it clear that the participants understood the objectives of the study. Kumar (2005) acknowledges that it is unethical to accumulate information without the knowledge of the participants, and their expressed willingness and informed consent. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the participants were given the outline of the topics to be tackled and they were advised that they were under no obligation to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with. They were also oriented that they are free to excuse themselves should they want to use the rest room.

h. Limitation of the study

The limitation encountered by the researcher is the small number of participants that it is wise to be cautious in generalizing from the findings. When conducting any type of research it is beneficial to carry out the research on a larger and more in-depth scale to have a more comprehensive analysis of the study. But the use of interview with semi-structured questions proved to be useful in getting in-depth and meaningful data from the participants.

This researcher is vigilant enough to avoid "researcher bias" and is confident to have gathered valid findings.

III. Findings

This part will draw upon the main themes and present the findings which surfaced during the discussion process and subsequent data analysis. First is a brief profile of each of the participant. The key themes that emerged following data analysis as perceived by the participants were: difficulty in time management, low energy level in answering the learning activity sheets, poor comprehension on analytical subjects, financial hardship for gadgets and internet load, poor self-confidence, support from family, help from teachers, encouragement from friends and feeling of self-worth.

a. Participants

- Participant A is male, 18 years old and is working as a store keeper.
- Participant B is male, 18 years old and is a rice mill operator.
- Participant C is male, 19 years old and is working in a mining firm.
- Participant D is male, 19 years old and is a construction worker.

b. Difficulty in time management

All of the participants mentioned that they have difficulty in managing their time since they are working full-time since the pandemic took place. They have to spend eight hours and more at the work place and could barely find time reading their learning activity sheets. One participant mentioned that there are instances when he could not find time reading the learning modules especially during busy times in the rice mill:

"During rice harvest time, there are lots of people who want their rice milled. I need to extend time so to accommodate them leaving the learning modules on the side."

(Participant B)

Another participant mentioned the need to help in the household chores when he arrives from work:

“When I arrive home, I still have to help with chores like washing the dishes.”

(Participant A)

One participant divulged the pressure he feels when friends would invite him to have good time after a day's work:

“There are instances that I will be invited by my friends to have a drink or two and I cannot say NO to them... leaving my learning sheets unanswered.”

(Participant D)

Interestingly, Participant C said that he sees the learning activities as merely tasks to be finished. That is why he only spares a few minutes with them and considers copying from a classmate as the best option to expedite the completion of the task.

c. Low energy level in answering the learning activity sheets

All the interviewees mention about the tiredness they feel when they reach home after their work:

“I'm so tired when I arrive our house that I sometimes fell asleep forgetting about the learning modules.”

(Participant D)

“It seems that I will feel laziness when dealing with the learning activities. I think it's because of being tired from a very long day of physical exertions.”

(Participant B)

Participant A said that he cannot think straight when he is exhausted. He sometimes allows his other siblings to answer the learning activity sheets since he will then sleep early after taking dinner.

d. Poor comprehension on analytical subjects

All the participants said that they better learn with the face-to-face modality. They mentioned that they find difficulties in understanding English, Science and Mathematics.

One participant mentioned that he will be overwhelmed with too much numbers:

“When I will see a learning module full of numbers, my mind will shut down. If there is a teacher, at least I can ask him/her all about them.”

(Participant A)

Another participant also relies on the tutelage of a teacher for him to be guided with scientific terminologies that he cannot understand:

“I wish it is still the face-to-face modality of teaching since I do not understand the terms used in Science especially in Physics. I will skip these lessons and allow my brilliant friends to answer them.”

(Participant C)

“There are times when I will feel sad looking at the things which I do not understand. I worry about my grades and my learnings too.”

(Participant A)

Incidentally, the four participants divulged that they have known persons who are doing the work of answering the learning modules for a fee. These individuals are mostly college students. There were even those who ask for five hundred pesos for a week answering all the required outputs.

e. Financial hardship for gadgets and internet load

Since the senior high school teachers supplement their lessons through online platforms, all the participants mentioned about their hardship in joining the Google Meet and Zoom episodes since they do not have phones which can access these applications:

“Baratohon da ako cellphone Sir. Di man makadaug nan jaon na mga app... (I only have a cheap phone Sir. It won't access such app...)”

(Participant A)

One mentioned a being behind since he cannot afford for internet load:

“Malooy gud ako sa ako kaugalingon Sir kay sila hamok nay tag istoryahan... data da man gud an ako! (I pity myself sometimes since my classmates are already discussing a lot... I only have data for my phone!)”

”

(Participant C)

When asked about the money coming from their work or their salary, one mentioned:

"I give the money directly to my mother so that I can help for the provision of our food."

(Participant D)

f. Poor self-confidence

Although the participants do not consider working as a source of feeling ashamed, three of them mentioned that they lack self-confidence especially when asking for help from their classmates.

One mentioned that his clothes cannot match those who taking up STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics):

"Masipog ako mangutana sa tla kay karaan ako mga baro, lajo na sa uso. (I feel ashamed asking help from them since my clothes are old and out of fashion.)"

(Participant B)

"There are instances when I will be ashamed in asking from our teachers, they might say: Who are you, by the way?"

(Participant A)

One participant mentioned about the strong feeling of being ashamed when he is laughed at due to his situation:

"Even if I am not doing anything wrong, I still feel belittled when someone laughs at my situation as a working student."

(Participant D)

g. Support from the family

One prominent theme found on the coded notes is the participants' opinion on how their families support them. All of the participants expressed that they feel that they are being supported by their family members.

A participant mentioned about how his elder siblings help him with his school activities:

"An ako na Ate an magtrabaho usahay nan ako mga project kun makit-an ako nija na tagkapoy na gikan sa trabaho. (My elder sister will sometimes be the one to work on my project if she observes I'm already tired from work.)"

(Participant C)

Another mentioned about the encouragement he gets from his mother:

"I always feel good and would feel motivated to continue with my studies when my mother encourages me to go on even if I'm already tired."

(Participant D)

h. Help from the teachers

Three participants mentioned the uplifting feelings they feel when they were visited by their teachers. They felt that the mentors are concerned about them. Although they seldom attend the virtual meetings conducted by their advisers but there were instances when their subject teachers sent them messages.

One participant mentioned how the teachers' encouragements

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"There was a time when I received a text message from my teacher and I was really happy realizing that she is concerned to me. I felt motivated to answer my backlogs."

(Participant A)

Interestingly, one participant mentioned about being motivated with the "likes" he gets from his teacher on his Facebook posts:

"When Sir X likes my posts on the social media site, I will always be motivated and wish that our school will open once again!"

(Participant C)

i. Encouragement from friends

The interviewees discussed their strong connection to their friends. All of them mentioned that they find time seeing their friends especially during their free time. They will share their difficulties and their struggles during these episodes and they also drink alcohol but not excessively

One interesting response on this theme is:

"Without my friends, I do not think I can survive distance learning due to the pandemic. I was always sad during the lockdown and it was my

friends who brought me joy.”

(Participant D)

j. Feeling of self-worth

Although the four interviewees insinuated about moments when they have poor self-confidence, the recurring theme of self-worth is obvious:

“I think I’m doing the right thing. Compared to others who are lazy and are just burdens for their families, at least I am contributing something...”

(Participant D)

“I am not giving problems to my parents, in fact I am spending the money I get out from my work.”

(Participant B)

k. Reflections and Projections for the future

The four interviewees divulged that the distance learning modality brought about by the pandemic has exposed them to challenges and they were able to develop coping strategies among themselves.

This has brought reflections from the researcher especially on how to consider the senior high school working students to help them attain the academic ease the Department of Education is advocating. The schools must profile the students (especially in the senior high school since these learners are already “employable”) and will be given ample interventions. The vulnerabilities of these students can be subjects for policies from the school and PTA (Parents and Teachers Association).

For the developed coping strategies, there is a need to enhance them through motivational sessions and even debriefing and counseling for the learners to continue becoming a willing learner despite the circumstances.

IV. Discussion, Analysis and Recommendations

a. Discussion and analysis about the findings in relation to the research objectives

The study revealed that there are indeed challenges and coping strategies of the senior high school working students. Due to the difficulties brought about by the pandemic, there are students who opted to work to augment family income and to help their families survive.

One major theme to come out of the discussion is difficulty in time management of the participants. When students are enrolled in face-to-face classes, the instructor sets a predetermined schedule. Many online courses are set up with a great deal of flexibility. There may be due dates built into the course, but the student will need to set his own schedule for completing course work. Flexibility -- while one of the greatest benefits of online learning -- can create issues for students who have trouble maintaining a schedule. Students need to find a way to balance the flexibility of online learning with a disciplined schedule to be successful online learners. In terms of time management, a pre-survey resulted that 45% students still can manage their time, 21% cannot manage their time, and majority of them try to do multi-tasking. Mostly, multi-tasking is considered as a negative activity affecting quality of productivity, hampering learning, and promoting unsocial behavior (Ettinger, 2020).

On low energy on answering the learning activity sheets, the pandemic has made it abundantly clear that in-person school is essential for the well-being and education of students, and it is only through a physical environment that students can function to the best of their ability. While some teachers online have attempted to replicate intense debates and thoughtful discussions that make many students prefer in-person classes, these experiences have not been as fruitful. The lack of energy due to other tasks, internet disruptions and many other small differences take away from the usually-stimulating U-High environment, making it more of a chore than an engaging learning experience (Appelbaum, 2020).

Poor comprehension on analytical subjects like English, Science and Mathematics is prevalent during distance learning. The physical absence of the instructor during asynchronous learning (independent learning) means that they may not be available to guide or support the student when they need it most. This means the student may need to wait for the next synchronous learning (live instruction/class time) period to get support or will have to reach out to the teacher via email or other communication channels. Oftentimes, getting support relies on the student formulating questions and asking for help; something some students may find difficult. Also, if the student has misunderstood a concept or is missing vital building blocks in their knowledge, they may not be aware that they are on the wrong track. Working one-to-one with a tutor will ensure your student gets the support they need and help them build back any educational foundations they may be missing due to distance learning.

Financial hardship resulting to the digital divide is a recurring theme as well. Despite the effort that goes into printing materials, K-12 teachers are still expected to be available for consultations either online (usually through Facebook Messenger) or by text. This requires a laptop and an internet connection, which is out of reach for many public school teachers, whose starting monthly salary is PHP 22,000 (USD 420). Many students, too, still need the internet to do supplemental research on more complex assignments. That’s a problem, given a DepEd survey showing that, of the 6.5 million

students who have access to the internet, approximately 20 percent use computer shops or other public places to go online. Worse, 2.8 million students have no way of going online at all. This is especially common in the rural areas where 53 percent of the population live and where both internet access and speed can be a challenge. Then, there is the pressing need to have money to be connected on the internet.

Poor self-confidence among the working students is another challenge encountered by these population during the pandemic. A large body of literature is related to measuring students' self-confidence in learning. Tripathy & Srivastava (2012) believe that self-confidence is an attitude and students with self-confident believe on their abilities, they are goal-directed, they believe that they will reach their goals and expectations. Self-confidence is not the same in all areas of a person's life. It is possible that an individual be very confident in one area of life and less confident in some other areas of life. Mahyuddin et al. (2006) has investigated the relationship between students' self-efficacy and their English language achievement on 1,146 students and has found out that more than a half of the students were highly self-confident and less than the half number of students were low self-confident. Still, there is a significant number of working students who are male with low confidence level.

With the challenges came the coping strategies among the participants. Support from the family is indeed enriching. Children learn best when the significant adults in their lives -- parents, teachers, and other family and community members -- work together to encourage and support them. This basic fact should be a guiding principle as we think about how schools should be organized and how children should be taught. Schools alone cannot address all of a child's developmental needs: The meaningful involvement of parents and support from the community are essential. The need for a strong partnership between schools and families to educate children may seem like common sense. In simpler times, this relationship was natural and easy to maintain. Teachers and parents were often neighbors and found many occasions to discuss a child's progress. Children heard the same messages from teachers and parents and understood that they were expected to uphold the same standards at home and at school (Commer, Haynes, 1997)

Support from the teacher resulted as one of the coping strategies of the participants of this study. Learning attitudes are rooted in the support that students receive from teachers and families. Analyses based on PISA 2018 in the OECD Skills Outlook 2021 (OECD, Forthcoming) shed light on the crucial role played by both teacher practices and parental emotional support as important drivers of the development of attitudes. Different forms of support can be incentivized and shaped by effective policy intervention, generally, but even more so in the extraordinary circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is important to understand which are the most suitable forms of support that teachers and families can embrace to sustain the digital learning process of children.

Support and encouragement from friends play a crucial role in the coping strategies of the interviewees. Educators can create new ways for students to connect: The situations have taken away many opportunities for students to interact, and schools must replace them. Instead of socializing time in the cafeteria, educators can build in time for students to socialize in virtual spaces. They can replace group work in the classroom with assignments students can collaborate on virtually. There is also a need to recognize that some students will need extra help: Not all students can easily and naturally develop the social and emotional skills they need to navigate uncertainty, overcome challenges, and develop relationships. Educators can support these students in particular by creating formal opportunities to socialize, such as teacher-led social groups.

It's not an overstatement to say the COVID-19 pandemic will likely change us for life. Not only have we lost loved ones and faced unprecedented challenges, the outbreak has taken our lives out of our hands - changing the way we work, socialize and go about our daily lives. Unsurprisingly, it has had a significant impact on our confidence and self-esteem too.

Engaging in self-care is also essential. This can be taking time off, exercising, pampering yourself or making time for hobbies. Not only will it improve your general sense of well-being, it will gradually boost how you see yourself too. This is how to boost self-worth.

b. Recommendations

With the perceived challenges and developed coping strategies among the senior high school working students during the distance learning modality brought about by the COVID 19 pandemic, the researcher was able to develop a theory that the challenges encountered by these group of learners are difficulty in time management, low energy level in answering the learning activity sheets, poor comprehension on analytical subjects, financial hardship for gadgets and internet load, poor self-confidence. The coping strategies they have developed are: support from family, help from teachers, encouragement from friends and feeling of self-worth.

A quantitative research focusing on these factors should be conducted to arrive to a conclusion what specific challenge and coping strategy are the major key indicators to arrive policy recommendations in enhancing the learning of this specific population. Inferential statistics can also be employed to get significant relationships on the demographics of the future respondents for deeper analysis.

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Appendix

**Appendix One
Interview Schedule**

1. How are you doing with distance learning modality?
2. What do you find most difficult with this new modality?
3. To ease such difficulties what are the things that you do?
4. What are the challenges that you encounter during distance learning as a working student?
5. What are the things you do to cope with the challenges encountered?
6. What comes to your mind with your situation as you work and study at the same time?
7. What are the coping mechanisms being used?
8. What is your perception with the challenges you encounter?
9. What are the things that you learned from the pandemic?
10. What will happen if the pandemic is controlled?

Appendix 2

(Example of Coded analysis as a result of the Focus Group Discussion)

Coding: Difficulty in time management

2. *What do you find most difficult with this new modality?*

“During rice harvest time, there are lots of people who want their rice milled. I need to extend time so to accommodate them leaving the learning modules on the side.”

(Participant B)

Coding: Poor comprehension on analytical subjects.

4. *What are the challenges that you encounter during distance learning as a working student?*

“I wish it is still the face-to-face modality of teaching since I do not understand the terms used in Science especially in Physics. I will skip these lessons and allow my brilliant friends to answer them.”

(Participant C)

Coding: Support from the family

7. *What are the coping mechanisms being used?*

“An ako na Ate an magtrabaho usahay nan ako mga project kun makit-an ako nija na tagkapoy na gikan sa trabaho. (My elder sister will sometimes be the one to work on my project if she observes I’m already tired from work.)”

(Participant C)